

Und Dann War Da Eine
“And Then There Was One”

Word Count: 989

And Then There Was One

Wolfgang breathed deeply, the warm air of the courthouse helped to steady his racing heartbeat as he stepped up to the stand. Outside, the day was clear and hot as the sun shone from a cloudless sky through the windows. Wolfgang's thoughts were interrupted when an American general stood up. "Mr. Schultz, if you would please tell the court of your time as a guard in the death camp, Auschwitz. Begin from the time of your transfer to the day the camp was liberated by Allied forces." Wolfgang adjusted himself in the chair and began his testimony. "It was very cold; a train was taking troops from the Eastern Front back to Germany..."

-Auschwitz- December, 1944-

A train flew down the tracks. It was leaving Russia and was headed for the heart of Germany, its shrill whistle penetrated deep into the silence of the night. By morning, the train had reached its destination. All the guards got off. One of the men's names was Wolfgang Schultz. Wolfgang approached the main gates of Auschwitz and they opened slowly and closed after all of the guards. All the men were shown to their rooms. The guards' barracks were well heated and the beds had soft mattresses. The prisoners had neither.

On guard duty, Wolfgang first saw them. The Jews, Dirty and thin, were unloaded from the cattle cars; he was not sure how many were jammed into such a small thing. All were wearing the distinctive yellow Star of David on their clothing. The Jews were herded into two lines. In both lines, everything was taken from them, their hair was cut off and all clothing removed. Then they would go into a building where they were outfitted with the same clothes as the other prisoners. The second line led into a small concrete building. After some time, no one came out, yet the line kept moving. A chill ran down Wolfgang's spine as he comprehended the use of the second line. He looked away and felt sick.

The crack of gunfire rang through the camp. Wolfgang shot out of his bed and awoke the guard next to him. "Was waren das für Schüsse?" Wolfgang asked. "Wahrscheinlich gefangene erschossen." Wolfgang peered out the window. He saw the bodies of ten dead men some distance from the barracks. The compound was dark except for one place illuminated by the various spotlights emanating from the guard towers. Wolfgang went back to his bed, but did not sleep. He wanted nothing more than to help the Jews, but would be shot for treason if he tried to do anything.

Wolfgang put on his uniform and got his gun as he prepared for the day. He was one of the guards for barrack seventeen. He approached the worn down building to bring the prisoners outside for apell. "Role Anruf! Jeder aus der Kaserne! Schnell! Schnell! Schnell!" Wolfgang called everyone out. They filed into the compound looking worse and worse every day. Three men had died last night, and too many more came to fill their places. After apell, Wolfgang found one of the new prisoners alone for a brief moment. "Ich möchte ihnen helfen, zu entkommen." Surprise had silenced the man. Wolfgang continued "Ich brauche dich, um vier weitere Neunkömmlinge, um mit ihnen zu entkommen." The man went around the compound to find four of the people he came there with. They were easy to distinguish from the rest because they were not so thin and sleep deprived as the rest of the prisoners.

An adrenaline rush overtook Wolfgang as he whistled the signal to start the escape. The guard was changed and Wolfgang was put on duty at the fence. He distracted the other guard with him to draw attention away from the barbed wire. The five men evaded the searchlight, probing the compound and headed to the planned spot where the barbed wire was out of reach of the spotlights. The men cut the wire toward the bottom of the fence where they hoped no one would notice and they crawled through the small opening, getting small cuts on the way through. The escapees were clear of the camp and Wolfgang relaxed once they cleared the patrol outside the fence. He hoped the men could find help and wait out the war. The night was uneventful for the rest of the watch; however, the

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week was all but that. Russian forces were marching towards Auschwitz and the war was just about over.

-Nuremberg-Germany 1946-

The American general stood up, what he was about to say would dash any hopes Wolfgang had of being found innocent. "Do you have any proof?" Wolfgang muttered under his breath "verdammt". Then aloud he reluctantly said "Nein. I do not even know their names." Someone entered the courtroom as shouts emanated from outside. "You cannot go in there!" The man who had entered the courtroom had captured the attention of every member of the panel. Finally the man said, "My name is Aaron Radskey. I escaped Auschwitz in a group of five men, including myself, thanks to him." Joseph motioned at Wolfgang. He let out a breath that he hadn't realized he'd been holding as the panel had the man step up to the stand. The man began "I had just arrived in..."

-Auschwitz-January, 1945-

A cattle train had just arrived. The people aboard were processed and assigned to barracks. Not two hours after arriving, a German guard told him he could help him and four other people escape. The guard was Wolfgang. After finding the four other men, Wolfgang gave them food, maps, and clothes. They cut the wire and crawled through with minimal injuries. From there, they went into hiding until the war's end.

-Nuremberg-Germany, 1946-

After consulting each other, the panel agreed on a verdict. The general stood. "The panel finds the defendant Wolfgang Schultz..."